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Horace Selwyn,

OR THE

BOY THAT WOULD BE HIS OWN  
MASTER.

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*By Mrs. L. L. Author of the "Proselyte," &c. &c.*

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# HORACE SELWYN,

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Boy that would be his own Master.

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BY MRS. L. L.

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“DO’NT you think we are old enough to do more as we like, Camden?”—said Horace Selwyn to his brother, as he rose from the table where they had been for some time busily engaged in study, “for my part, I know I should be better, if father would let me do as I pleased, and study when I liked; ’tis so provoking to be told constantly of one’s faults; to hear, ‘Oh, that is very *selfish*, Horace,’ or *mean*, or *passionate*, or something,—say Camden, don’t you think it makes us worse?—say you, sir? now don’t sit like a loon, counting the rounds in the carpet, but speak once on an important subject, without spending an hour to think it over, as if you were preparing to make a speech.” Camden Selwyn raised his large mild eyes from the carpet to his brother’s face, and



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written account of all you do; and frankly acknowledge if you have been mistaken in your judgment, and are not qualified to guide yourself." "I wish he would," said the bright laughing boy, rubbing his hands together; "I wish he would try me; I know I should behave a great deal better, and," continued he, standing quite erect, and drawing his fingers through the glossy curls that clustered round his fair young brow, "I am almost thirteen, and surely old enough to be no longer considered a baby."

Camden Selwyn smiled; he was an amiable boy, of a thoughtful, I might say a serious cast of character, he had nothing of the fearless boldness of his brother, though he was not timid, he was retiring and modest, his mind was highly cultivated and much superior to boys of his age in general, his manners, though usually agreeable, were sometimes too stately—from the proud feelings of a heart, not yet subdued by grace, humbled by sorrow and intercourse with the world that bears any thing better than pride, and generally contrives to subdue it. He was preparing to enter college; Horace was to enter a counting room, as soon as he was qualified, they were both affectionate, obedient children, though Horace, like most boys of his age and *disposition*, had a great desire to be a man, to show his consequence and to strut. He had often wished to be twenty-one, that he might do as he pleased, and he now walked round

in high spirits at the thought of not being dictated or found fault with by any one. "Yes, yes," said he, "thirteen years have I been guided and advised; long enough in all conscience."—"Yes, Horace," said Camden, smiling, "long enough to go steady one month, for, as Pa' says, we have had the benefit of careful instruction, good examples, constant and unwearied attention, and it is quite probable, for a time we should go very well from habit; but I think when you try the *experiment*, you will soon be convinced that we are much, very much indebted to our parents." "Well, well, Camden, you will see, for I shall certainly try the experiment if Pa' will consent—will you ask him for me?"—"Yes, Horace, though I am loath to; particularly as it is the last month of the quarter, and I am sure you will lose the prize."—"Never fear for me, I shall study with twice the diligence, when I am my own master; I only ask you to obtain Pa's consent."—"I will," said Camden, with a very serious countenance, "though I know you will repent it."—"Now don't preach, Camden, for you look as sober and solemn as if I were about to do some dreadful action."

Camden left him without any answer, and soon returned with his father's consent on the conditions mentioned. The delighted Horace sprung away almost beside himself—"Good evening to you, Mr. Selwyn," said he, as he left the room, "I can run



down to cousin Carter's and stay as long as I please, without having a lecture when I come home,—I wish you a pleasant evening with your books, I am a gentleman at large; free as air, good bye, good bye, Mr. Student," said he, bowing with much civility, and laughing as he bounded away. It was late when he returned. Camden, and indeed all the younger branches of the family were asleep.

For several days, all went as usual; Horace studied well, and behaved with great propriety, and Camden, though a boy of reflection and judgment, began to think Horace was quite capable of judging and managing himself. There was a proud exultation in the sparkling black eyes of Horace; a confidence in his step, and an air of triumph in his whole deportment, that often made his parents smile. In the second week, Robert Mason, a young cousin, came to ~~make~~ the family a visit. He was a sprightly play-boy, and constantly proposing some new amusement. Horace was in high spirits; he could play when, and where he pleased, without hearing the disagreeable sounds of 'Study your lesson, my son,' or 'you have played enough,' or 'tis your bed time,' or 'go weed awhile in the garden,' and such like unpleasant directions." Following entirely the bent of his inclination, his studies were postponed from time to time or run over in haste, until he began himself to fear he should lose the school prize; which was a set of

books he was very anxious to obtain, for he knew his uncle, who had presented them to the school, expected he would, and beside, they were very valuable.

Camden, guided by his father, went on as usual, only rising an hour earlier, that he might have some extra time to enjoy with his cousin; for as Horace and Robert both rose late, his lessons were well got before the boys were ready for play. Mrs. Selwyn saw her son growing every day more negligent of his duties, and sometimes an earnest look, a shake of the head, or a sorrowful countenance would betray the wishes and thoughts she had promised to conceal.

The children were all invited to spend the day at a farm-house about three miles from town, where Mr. Rogers, an old acquaintance of Mr. Selwyn, always welcomed his family with hospitable kindness. They were all assembled the evening before, telling how early they should rise, and talking of their anticipated pleasure, some hoping it would be a fine day, some amusing themselves with little plays, in which they were always indulged after their lessons were learnt. All were full of joy and glee except Horace; who sat in the corner of the room, trying to study his lesson; again and again, he pressed his hand on his brow and repeated over the same words; he could not learn, for his thoughts were wandering to the green fields, the ripe fruits, the fine garden, and pleas-

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ant summer-house; where a table was always spread for them, under the rich vines that hung in graceful festoons, and spread quite to the sparkling brook that bubbled along under the arch opposite to the entrance. Sometimes he fixed his eyes on his books with an intense and earnest gaze, as if determined to persevere and turn a deaf ear to the gay group around him, which he had not resolution to leave for the solitude of his chamber.

After repeated efforts, he threw down the books, and standing up, said, "I don't know what ails me, but I cannot learn a line; however, I can make up lost time next week." Mr. Selwyn looked expressively at his wife; Horace saw the look, and blushing deeply turned to the table, where Camden, with his sister and cousin were playing a geographical game.—Dissatisfied with himself, he felt restless and cross, and soon disturbed them all by his ill humor. Mary who was a gentle, kind little girl, made room for him by her, and offered him half her cards. "No, no," said he, "you have played long enough—I must have your place." She looked earnestly at Camden, who insisted on her playing until her bed time, as he had promised her. "This is pretty doings indeed," said Horace, "do you think I am to stand still and look on, for a baby to play. No, hand me the cards, Mary." The tears stood in the eyes of the little girl, who looked at her father as she resigned her cards to the

young tyrant. Mr. Selwyn went to her, and patting her white neck, said, "I cannot interfere, my dear; Horace, you know, is his own *master*." Camden had already risen and resigned his seat, saying, as he laid the cards before his brother, "I played merely to amuse others, you are welcome to my place,"—"or mine," said his cousin, also rising and leaving the table. The countenance of Horace fell; he threw down the cards and left the room without speaking. When he returned, the younger children had retired—the older ones were listening to Mr. Selwyn's description of South America, where he had resided several years. Horace remained silent, though he had a great desire to ask questions and display some of his own knowledge, which was by no means trifling for a boy.

The next morning, by sunrise, they were all in the bustle of preparations for the visit to the farm house. Mr. Selwyn came on the piazza among them and said, as he looked up to the dark clouds that were already collecting in thick masses before the sun, "you must not go Camden, it will certainly rain before noon." "Rain, father," said the disappointed boy, his face blushing, "I am sure the sun shines very bright now, sir, and it is so pleasant and cool; can't we boys go, father, and let the girls stay at home?" "No, Camden," said Mr. Selwyn, and walked back to his room. The little girls could scarcely restrain their tears, as they went slowly into the house to put up their bonnets.

Horace stood for a few moments perplexed, vexed and disappointed, leaning on the railing of the piazza, and watching the sun beams that occasionally illuminated the scene. "Rain, indeed, said he with a scornful laugh; I wonder what Pa' means, I never saw a more pleasant morning—I've no notion of being frightened by a wind cloud, so come Robert lets be off." "You don't mean to go, surely, Horace," said Camden. "But I do though, and you would give your last school prize to go with me." "I should like to go I own, because I don't think it will rain," said he, but — "Oh, I understand; you are not your own master, while I am, most fortunately." "No, not exactly that; for if I went without the approbation of my parents I should not enjoy myself, even if it did not rain." "Well, good bye, I'll bring you some fruit; you see the comfort of being one's own masters." Camden was more disappointed than he could express when he saw the boys depart in high spirits: he stood looking after them until he heard his father's voice in the garden, where they all were generally employed an hour before breakfast. It was but a small spot, merely for flowers and trifles: but Mr. Selwyn encouraged his children to keep it in order for their health, as well as amusement. This morning they all appeared listless and idle, and assembled at the breakfast table with sorrowful countenances. The rain began to fall before they left the breakfast



room, and Mr. Selwyn said to Camden "before night my son, you will be more convinced than ever of the goodness of God in placing children so entirely in the power of parents, and in giving them such watchful guardians. The great Author of our being has in all ages manifested his will and pleasure in that respect; and not only commanded the obedience of children, but promised a temporal reward to those who honor their parents."

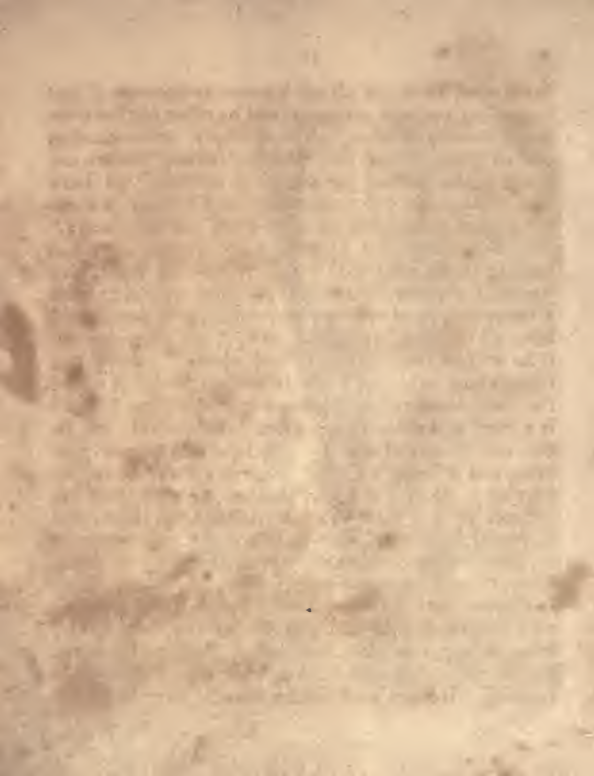
By dinner time it rained violently, and Mrs. Selwyn, with the anxiety of a tender mother, looked out on the pelting storm with a sad countenance: "I wish," said she to her husband, "we had prevented their going; I fear they will take cold, for they must have been wet through before they reached the farm house; perhaps you had better send Andrew with the chaise and coats." "No, Emma, no, I wish Horace to be thoroughly convinced of his weakness and want of judgment, and," continued he looking round on the bright, happy circle, from whose young faces all tears of disappointment had disappeared, "I think Horace's month of trial will be a useful lesson to you all." "I don't think Horace is half so clever as he was before," said Mary, "though he gives me pretty things sometimes." "I fear," said Camden, "he will lose the prize of which he felt so sure, for he has no regular hours for study, and wastes much time by saying, 'O, it is only a few moments, I will not go for my





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book now, I can get all my lessons to-morrow ;' but something perhaps prevents, and he often hurries over many lessons at once, without really understanding one of them. I see very plainly, father, that we are much better guided by you and mother; we have time enough for our amusement, and I think we enjoy ourselves much more than if we played always." Mr. Selwyn smiled affectionately on his son, and turning to his wife said, " You will not, I trust, give yourself any concern about Horace, my dear, he is a hardy boy, and will not be injured by a ducking; I have no doubt of its raining all day, and depend upon it he will be restless and uneasy enough to keep him from taking cold, as he can do nothing but walk round the long desolate parlor of our kind old friend, which is a very agreeable room, when filled with smiling faces, and illumined with the sun light that comes quivering and dancing through the roses that shade the narrow windows, and perfume the air with their fragrance, he will have sufficient leisure to reflect, and to regret his folly. Robert heard my commands to my own children, and as he chose to disregard them, he must take the consequences."

Horace and his young companion went on their way very well until within a mile of the farm house, when it began to rain, and before they reached the house, they were wet to the skin, and weary with running. Robert sunk into a chair as soon as he en-

tered, completely exhausted. Horace said, as he shook himself and tried to brush the water from his hat: "Well, this is too bad, who would have thought to see rain this morning?" "Any body, my lad, that knew about weather at all; I dare say you came away before your father was stirring, as he would have told you to wait, we had no idea of seeing you; for the country is but a lonesomeish place for town folks when it rains." Horace looked mortified and vexed, and Mr. Rogers who was a fine, though plain, uneducated man, said to comfort him, "Well, never mind, you can't help it now, so we'll try to help you to some amusement; we are glad to see you, and you are welcome to any thing you wish." But what could they do, the rain poured down in torrents, and Horace thought he had never passed so long and tedious a day—he walked round the parlor—its clean white walls, bare floor, and fire place full of green boughs, looked so dreary to him now, while the wind and rain beat the beautiful bushes against the windows, and scattered the full blown roses in every direction:—"Oh Robert, how lonesome it is," said he, as he again and again took down the strings of bird's eggs, and wished he was at home, turned the curiously cut fly trap round and round, went to the kitchen and asked every one he saw if they thought it would not clear off before night. "I don't much think it will, master," was the invariable reply; and the wearied

boys were glad to retire to bed at an early hour. But the morning was equally stormy, and Horace was ready to cry with vexation, as he looked out upon the dreary scene: "I'll not stay here another day, that's poz," said he; "no, I will spend all I have to procure a conveyance home." But Mr. Rogers, to whom he mentioned his wishes, told him to be patient until noon, when they were going to town with a load, and would take them home, if they wished. "I knew," said the farmer, "you would be homesick like; but you must come when the sun shines, and then we'll have a good time in the summer house." Another long morning passed:—"Oh, if I had my study books," said the impatient boy as he paced the long room.

At last they started in a wagon and reached home before dinner. Robert with a sore throat, and Horace with a mixed expression of mortification and sauciness, said to Camden as he entered, "Well, I suppose you was mighty glad you was not caught in the scrape; but there is some fruit for you all, which Mr. Rogers sent." The children were soon in high glee round the fruit. Mrs. Selwyn took Robert to her room to attend to his throat: he was quite indisposed all the next day; but he recovered, and the whole was forgotten in a short time.

A few days after their visit there was a military parade, and the boys were much amused with the sol-

diers, and the mob that followed them after they dispersed. Horace proposed walking to a hill that overlooked the town, and they went in high spirits. "I should admire," said Horace, as he seated himself on the stump of a tree, "to make a little volcano." "It would be delightful," said Camden, "I was reading about one yesterday, nothing would please me better, but we need so many things, iron filings, powder and"—Horace had pulled a large stone from the hollow stump of a tree and now said laughing while he took out a bundle and opening it displayed the material for making the mimic volcano, "behold my treasure." Camden was surprised and pleased; the excavation was soon made, but when the powder was put in, he remembered his father's command, never to play with it or use it, without his special permission, and stopping short, he said, "Oh, Horace, we have forgotten father's command." "I," said Horace, with a lofty look, "am my own master, and you can stand by and look on, without blame." "I shall not stay to see you, and I beg you only to wait until I go and ask Pa' to come and help us, I know he will if he is not particularly engaged."—Camden was moving away, but Horace caught his arm and said, "not so fast, my honey; Father has gone to Mr. Mason's, I saw him go, and if you play tell-tale, all my fun will be spoilt, for Pa' will not let me make it, I know—so do stand aside and let me go on." "No, Horace, no, I shall



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not stay," and he went slowly down the hill, often looking back, as he heard their merry voices.

His father was just entering the door as Camden came to the piazza, and he flew to him, saying, "Can you walk to the hill with me, sir?"—"Is there any thing particular to call me there?"—"Yes, father, but don't ask me any thing about it if you please." They walked to the hill, and as they ascended, admiring the prospect, they were startled by a loud noise like the explosion of a cannon, and a wild piercing shriek, Mr. Selwyn sprang forward, followed by Camden, but what was his distress and amazement, to see Horace, with his legs torn and bleeding, prostrate on the ground, covered with smoke and sand. He took him in his arms, saying, my poor child, my poor boy, what has happened to you?" "Oh, father forgive me, it was done by powder," said Horace, as he sunk almost fainting from pain and weakness on his father's bosom. Mr. Selwyn said no more, but holding him as tenderly as possible, carried him home. Camden followed wiping away the tears that filled his eyes, as he heard the deep groans of his brother, and saw his bleeding limbs.

Mr. Selwyn learned, on questioning Robert, that Horace could not make the volcano go off as he expected—not understanding the chemical combinations, and arrangement. He tried, and tried in vain; until weary and disappointed, he put in *fire*—but so cover-

ed, he thought, as not to cause an immediate explosion, and wishing to have, as he said, a real one, he was beating the earth hard down with his feet, when it exploded and threw him prostrate, and lacerated as we have already related.

It was many weeks before the unfortunate boy could stand: and many more before he was able to walk. Often, very often, while he was recovering, did he say, "Oh! how could I be so foolish as to suppose I had the wisdom, judgment and knowledge of my father.—But I never wish to be my own master again—no, never, never!"

The school prize which he had been so sure of obtaining, was borne off by Andrew Mason,—it was the last Horace ever lost—for I need scarcely tell my young readers, that he was ever after, a dutiful, obedient son—a comfort to his parents, and an honor to himself.

On the last day of the quarter, Camden came home with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, bearing a superb "Virgil," the reward of his diligence and attention. He would not add to the mortification of his brother, in his present weak state, by a display of his treasure, and put it quietly away, after the family had seen and admired it. But years after, whenever Horace opened the Book, it reminded him of his own folly, and his brother's wisdom.



